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ABSTRACT

This brochure describes the changing social patterns which have resulted in increased female labor force participation. Educational counseling is necessary to develop a woman's talents for a rewarding career. (BH)

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EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS: Their Special Counseling Needs

In 1970, when

We anticipate that the decennial census will show that women are employed in every occupation and profession,

Federal legislation assures equal opportunity and equal pay in employment to a substantial majority, and

Financial assistance for vocational training, advanced courses, and higher education is becoming increasingly available;

We find that

9 out of 10 girls will work some time during their lives.

About half the women in the population between the ages of 18 and 65 are in the labor force, and the percentage continues to rise rapidly.

BUT the CAREER "SIGHTS" of all TOO MANY of our GIRLS are still LIMITED and UNREALISTIC.

Most girls have a romantic image of life: school, marriage, a family—and they live happily ever after. But this is not the complete picture. A more accurate life pattern of the modern woman includes school, work and/or marriage, rearing a family (sometimes continuing to work by either choice or necessity), and a return to work when the youngest child is in school. This "quiet revolution" in the life pattern of American women presents a special challenge to those responsible for the counseling of girls.

Today we are concerned with developing and utilizing all our human resources. The counselor can help girls to consider seriously the significant facts, can encourage them to prepare for their dual role as homemakers and workers, and can assist them to plan now for a total life.

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What are the elements in this new life pattern?

The life expectancy of women is constantly rising. A girl born in 1967 had a life expectancy of 74 years.

The increase in teenage marriages means that about half of today's women are married by age 21; they have their last child at about age 30; by the time the youngest child is in school, a mother may have 30 to 35 more years of active life before her.

Labor force projections through the 1980's indicate that women and youth will provide the largest source of new entrants into the labor force.

In 1969

About 30.5 million women 16 years of age and over were in the labor force. Nearly 2 out of every 5 workers were women.

Also

Almost 3 out of 5 women workers were married (59 percent); 22 percent were single; and 19 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated.

About 2.8 million women workers were heads of their families in 1969.

And finally,

Analysis of the data that show the extent of women's participation in the labor force by age group indicates that a high proportion of women are employed in the early working years; then there is a marked decrease during the childbearing, childrearing years; followed by a progressive increase in each age category thereafter until age 55 or 60.

The two periods when women are most likely to work are during ages 20 through 24 and 45 through 54. Fifty-seven percent of the women in the younger age group and 54 percent of those in the older age group were in the labor force in 1969.

This "split-level" characteristic of the working life of the American woman is the basic reason why girls' career plans should be made early and in the light of a total life plan that anticipates discontinuity in employment. Girls in school should prepare for careers or jobs in which they would like to work for the remainder of their lives, if necessary--careers that can be taken up again when they reenter the world of work. To be satisfied when they return to work, both psychologically and financially, they should select fields that challenge their talents and help them to realize their full potential.

Girls and women now in the labor force work for many reasons:

Single women work to support themselves.

Widows, divorcees, and other women heads of families may have to work to support themselves and their dependents or to supplement their incomes.

Married women work in many instances from compelling economic need. Many of them must supplement their husbands' earnings, which are insufficient for the families' basic needs.

The need for increased family income to help meet the rising cost of educating children, health and medical care, and the wider variety of goods and services considered essential to today's standard of living has led many more women to return to work.

Some women work for self-fulfillment.

In addition,

Labor-saving home equipment and prepared foods shorten the time needed for household tasks.

Increasingly, women are seeking the right to choose how they will make their contribution to the family and to the community--how they will use the years between caring for young children and retirement.

Since so many women are working--and we need this womanpower to help meet the many and growing needs of our economy--why do we find them clustered in the lower paying, less skilled occupations? Is it lack of education?

The facts are that

For every 100 girls in the population aged 17 in October 1967, 78 graduated from high school in 1968. For every 100 girls in the population aged 21 in October 1967, 19 graduated from college in 1968.

In March 1968 all women workers (18 years and over) had completed on the average, 12.4 years of school; nonwhite women workers, 11.7 years.

Nevertheless,

Although women work in all occupations, in 1969 the largest number (9.9 million) were employed in clerical jobs. About 4.7 million were service workers (excluding private household), 4.5 million were operatives, and 4.2 million were in professional and technical occupations.

And

In 1968 women workers (14 years and over) had median earnings of \$2,512 compared with \$6,442 for men. The median for full-time year-round women workers in 1968 was \$4,457 compared with \$7,664 for men.

An important part of the answer to the disparity in women's educational attainment and earnings lies in the goals and aspirations of these women when they were girls. Counselors particularly, but teachers and parents as well, can help girls recognize the new realities. Girls need help and guidance in planning and preparing for their roles as homemakers and workers, so that they can realize their fullest potential in both spheres.

Girls' talents, in whatever field, should be permitted to develop to the optimum. If college is not possible financially, or not a wise choice, girls still can prepare for careers in many expanding fields such as health and data processing. Why not as an apprentice in the fields of their choice? Why not a lady plumber, like "Cluny Brown," if that's her bent? The entire world of work is open to qualified women.

Counselors, teachers, and parents need to help girls realize they can qualify, and then help them to prepare themselves with appropriate courses so that they do qualify to meet the needs of our total society. Their goal should be to help girls--the women of tomorrow--contribute at their highest potential whether, in addition to their roles in the home, they work for pay or as volunteers.

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THE CAREERS FOR WOMEN series of leaflets including, WHY NOT BE an Engineer, Optometrist, Pharmacist, Medical Technologist, Public Relations Worker, Technical Writer, Mathematician, and Personnel Specialist, and leaflets on Careers for Women in Conservation and Job Training Suggestions for Women and Girls are available on request from the Women's Bureau.

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